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**Colorado River Storage Project Act 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event**  
**Glen Canyon Dam, Page, Arizona**  
**October 19, 2006**

- Thank you Brenda for your kind introduction.
- I also would like to acknowledge Lt. Gov. Hebert from the state of Utah, and it's good to see two of Reclamation's past commissioners here today as well, and ...
- Lt. Gov., Commissioners, and distinguished guests - As forward-looking as Congress was in April of 1956, when the Colorado River Storage Project Act was passed and sent to President Eisenhower for signature, I often wonder if anyone then really knew how significant that moment would ultimately prove to be.
- The delegations from the Upper Basin states, along with the governors, water districts, economic developers, and farmers, predicted the need for the Upper Basin states to have a project that would become the guiding force behind the development and management of water.
- These visionaries could foresee the day when water demands, water shortages, population and economic growth would converge.
- Likewise, all involved were committed to continuing the growth of the intermountain west that followed World War II and the Korean War.
- But, I wonder if they realized just how significant that growth would turn out to be or how fast that growth would happen.
- In the 50 years since the act passed and construction began on Glen Canyon and Flaming Gorge Dams, change has occurred at a rate that probably would astound even the most optimistic of those visionaries.
- Today, millions of people live, work, and recreate in the Upper Basin states.
- Not only have the units of the Colorado River Storage Project allowed such growth and prosperity to occur, they have also become recreational magnets for those seeking a respite from the rigors of daily life.
- I'd like to take a moment and reflect on why the Colorado River Storage Project Act is so significant to all of us here today.

- Up to the present time, Reclamation has always managed to meet the water allocations from the Colorado River that were established for the seven basin states and the treaty with Mexico.
- But, as this 21<sup>st</sup> century began with a severe drought with impacts continuing to extend even today, all of us --- the federal government, the states, and those who depend upon the water supplies of the Colorado River --- we are all now contending with the harsh reality of an era of limitations.
- Reclamation Commissioner Elwood Mead recognized the limits of the resource when he said, “The problems of Western irrigation grow largely out of the fact that there is more land than water.” (Elwood Mead, Irrigation Institutions)
- Certainly, this quote continues to apply today – but also extends to our more contemporary needs of irrigation AND our many other demands for water for cities, recreation, and the environment.
- The settlement of the West was no different than anywhere else...pioneers and developers followed the waterways.
- That’s been the case for centuries with the Colorado River.
- The Native American’s dependence upon the river is well documented, along with the spiritual significance of the great canyons and other landmarks of the area.
- For instance, today’s celebration is in the shadow of Navajo Mountain and is just upstream from the Grand Canyon, two extremely important spiritual and cultural areas to many people.
- The Spanish explorers, including the Jesuit priests Dominguez and Escalante, traveled the region, crossing the river close to where we are today.
- Settlement of the west was compounded by severe winters which were followed by water shortages in the hot summers.
- Farmers from the water-rich eastern states were not prepared for the challenges of cultivating the west.
- Likewise, growing cities and towns were constrained by the lack of dependable and predictable water supplies.
- As the 1800’s turned into the 1900’s, development in the Colorado River Basin led to friction between the states, and the era of conflict was born.
- This isn’t the venue to spend a lot of time digging through the years of evolution of the “Law of the River.”

- But it is important to note that, out of necessity, over the past 84 years a legal framework and management process was developed across the Colorado River Basin.
- The Colorado River Compact of 1922 established the right of the Upper Basin to develop and use up to 7.5 million acre-feet of water annually. In return, the Upper Basin agreed to deliver the same, or 75 million acre-feet in any rolling 10-year period, to the Lower Basin.
- In 1922, the states couldn't agree upon the compact between them for allocation and management.
- The Upper Basin, however, did succeed in reaching consensus regarding the allocation of their Compact entitlement in 1948, thus setting the stage for Congress to enact the Colorado River Storage Project Act in 1956.
- The act ratified the Upper Basin Compact and authorized federal construction of reservoirs throughout the Upper Basin.
- The reach of the act is amazing. As Rick Gold and Brenda Burman have noted, the CRSP facilities provide 30.6 million acre-feet of live storage in the basin and generate over 4.1 billion kilowatt-hours of energy annually.
- And the CRSP participating projects develop water in the upper Colorado River system for irrigation, municipal and industrial uses, and other purposes.
- To date, 16 participating projects have been completed or are in the process of completion.
- The benefits of the participating projects are critical to local and regional economies throughout the Upper Basin.
- As I said earlier, I'm especially pleased and honored to see two retired Commissioners of the Bureau of Reclamation here today – Keith Higginson and John Keys – both with ties to my native state of Idaho.
- As they so well know, the ongoing work of the Colorado River Storage Project has not been without its controversies and challenges.
- In preparing for today, I reflected back to Commissioner Higginson's comments at the July 11, 1980, event, probably at this same spot on the dam, that marked the completion of the initial filling of Lake Powell.
- Commissioner Higginson recognized that controversy would probably accompany Glen Canyon Dam, and by extension the entire Colorado River Storage Project, in the years to come.

- He cited a 1967 *National Geographic Magazine* article that featured Lake Powell in which the magazine stated, “Good or bad, it has been done, and even a tamed river may offer more gifts than its conqueror is capable of comprehending.”
- Commissioner Higginson pointed out to us that no less an authority than John Wesley Powell said that cooperative ventures to build water projects were the only effective means by which water could be controlled and distributed in the West.
- In 1879, Powell said, “The West is an arid land hostile to farming and will never be settled, even with irrigation, unless the government dams the rivers to save up winter and spring runoff in artificial lakes.”
- Commissioner Higginson also foresaw the future when he spoke in 1980 of the millions of people who would visit the Colorado River Storage Project’s recreation features and the rest of Reclamation’s 330 dams and reservoirs.
- Even at that time, recreation accounted for nearly 14 percent of the nation’s gross national product and represented some \$200 million in economic benefits.
- Now, nearly 50 years later, we would all agree that the recreation use far exceeds even that of the Commissioner Higginson’s expectations.
- Since we have drawn from Keith Higginson’s experiences and observations, it’s only fair to do the same from John Keys’ tenure as Commissioner.
- John, of course, retired last April from a distinguished career with Reclamation.
- As recent as a year ago, he was dealing with the worst five-year drought in 500 years of Colorado River history.
- He was pointing out that, due to the drought, the Colorado system was working as designed.
- When the drought hit the five-year point --- just before the wet year that occurred in 2005 --- John’s message was that the system, from the headwaters on downstream to Hoover Dam, had more the 60 million acre-feet of storage capacity.
- And after five years of drought, there was still nearly 30-million acre-feet of water yet in storage.
- He also made a point of saying that the system was literally “half full”, not “half empty” as some of our more negative friends were saying.
- But the most sobering fact that Commissioner Keys was communicating was that, were it not for the features of the Colorado River Storage Project and the reliability of releases each year from Lake Powell, Lake Mead would have been nearly empty at the end of 2004.

- We commonly refer to the storage provided by Lake Powell and the other CRSP reservoirs as the “insurance policy” for the Upper Basin states.
- It is true, they enable these states to use their Colorado River apportionment and still be able to meet their Compact obligations to the Lower Basin.
- But it’s more than that.
- The recent drought has demonstrated that the entire river system, with its long-term carryover storage, works in harmony.
- In the case of the CRSP, not only did the Upper Basin meet its obligations, but the releases from Lake Powell enabled the Lower Basin system to also meet its obligations as well.
- So, where are we today in the Colorado River Basin?
- I believe we all continue to serve as the stewards of the river through our management actions
- Over the past nearly six years of the Bush Administration, I’ve been privileged to have been part of several significant efforts that demonstrate that commitment.
- First, we worked with the basin states to achieve a Quantification Settlement Agreement which, for the first time, quantified California’s water entitlements, helping the state work within its apportionment from the river.
- We also joined together to develop surplus guidelines to assist in water management during the times we have surplus water available.
- Now, we are engaged with the basin states and public in the development of strategies to guide us during times of prolonged drought and water shortages in the basin.
- This effort isn’t a unilateral federal action. All who wish to participate have the opportunity to join in the effort.
- But more importantly, for the first time in Colorado River Basin history, the seven states served by this great river system have come together and proposed a strategy that’s innovative and forward looking.
- While this strategy is being analyzed by the Department in our ongoing public process to finalize shortage guidelines and improve reservoir operations, I want to acknowledge that, by working together, the basin states have proposed a time of peace in the era of conflict – and a thoughtful strategy to cope with the era of limits.

- Through these actions, I believe you in the basin continue to honor the visionaries who gave us the Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956.
- I am confident that fifty years from now, standing on the same place as we are gathered today, the centennial of this great act will be celebrated.
- I predict that water managers and western historians alike will yet again proclaim the Colorado River Storage Project Act as one of the seminal acts that shaped the development of the American West.
- It seems fitting to conclude such a “birthday” event with a toast.
- I offer the following excerpts from a toast given in the 1920’s by Texas Governor Pat Neff.
- It is impossible to consider Governor Neff’s toast without being drawn to the waters of the Colorado River – the waters that former First Lady Ladybird Johnson, who dedicated Glen Canyon Dam, described as “...the heavenly blue lake that begins here...”
- Governor Neff said:

Water is the most abundant of all created commodities. It is older than the human race; it is known to the language of every land, and has followed the adventurous footsteps of man around and above the world....

Brewed by God in the divine distilleries of the skies, poured by nature’s hand from the cistern of the clouds, purified by the percolations of the ages through the hidden sands of the earth, and brought forth by the hand of man to glisten in the sunlight...it is indeed the beverage of life.”

- May all of you in this great river basin continue to enjoy that “beverage of life” amply provided by these very projects we celebrate here today.
- Thank you

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